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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS
Public Information Office
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688
www.courtinfo.ca.gov

415-865-7740

Lynn Holton
Public Information Officer

NEWS RELEASE

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Public Hearings to Seek Comment on Domestic Violence Case Guidelines

California Task Force Recommends New Ways to Improve Handling of Critical Cases in Trial Courts

San Francisco – Two statewide public hearings will be held in March 2007 to seek comments on draft guidelines and proposed practices to improve the handling of California court cases that involve allegations of domestic violence. Domestic violence allegations arise in many case types, including restraining order proceedings and family, juvenile, and criminal law.

The hearings will be sponsored by the Judicial Council's Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force, appointed by Chief Justice Ronald M. George to ensure fair and accessible justice for litigants in these critical cases and to promote victim safety and perpetrator accountability. Final recommendations will be made to the council in December 2007.

At each hearing, the task force will hear testimony from the public and a wide range of speakers, including judges, family law attorneys, advocacy groups, prosecutors, public defenders and criminal defense attorneys, probation officers, batterer intervention program providers, and other experts.

The proposed practices are designed to improve court leadership, the use of Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA) restraining orders, entry of orders into a statewide database, firearms relinquishment, and criminal law procedures. The public hearings will be held on these dates:

- **Southern California—March 14, 2007, 10:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.**
Ronald Reagan State Building, Auditorium
300 South Spring Street (corner of Third and Spring Street)
Los Angeles, California 90013
- **Northern California—March 21, 2007, 10:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.**

(over)

Hiram W. Johnson State Office Building
Milton Marks Conference Center (Lower Level), Auditorium
455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California 94102-3660

Public testimony is scheduled from 3:00 to 3:30 p.m. at each hearing. This period may be extended if necessary to ensure an opportunity for the public to address the task force.

Input on these proposals also will be sought at regional meetings with judicial officers and court staff, focus groups for specific stakeholders, and discussions with Judicial Council advisory committees.

The 18-member task force is chaired by retired Justice Laurence D. Kay, former presiding justice of the Court of Appeal, First Appellate District. Justice Tani Gorre Cantil-Sakauye, Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District, serves as the chair of the criminal procedure working group, and Judge Mary Ann Grilli, Superior Court of Santa Clara County, serves as the restraining order working group chair.

The task force's comprehensive proposals are available on the California Courts Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/advisorycommittees.htm#dvpp. They include both mandatory provisions required by statute or rule as well as advisory practices. The proposals are grouped into the following five categories:

Court leadership. These proposals are designed to improve the ways that courts work with justice system entities and community organizations in cases involving domestic violence allegations. They also concern the use of temporary judges.

DVPA restraining orders. This set of proposals addresses the DVPA restraining order process from the perspectives of litigants, the court, and law enforcement with the goal of simplifying, streamlining, and improving procedures.

Firearms relinquishment. Under California law, the restrained person must comply with the order to relinquish firearms. The proposals suggest numerous practices, legislation, and court forms that would improve this process and promote the safety of domestic violence victims.

Access to and entry of orders into statewide databases. This set of proposals presents immediate, interim, and long-range goals for improving access to and entry of restraining orders into the Domestic Violence Restraining Order System (DVROS) via the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS).

Criminal law procedures. In a 2005 report, the Attorney General outlined a series of problematic practices and recommendations relating to the adjudication of criminal domestic violence cases. The proposed practices seek to address issues raised in that report and to improve practices in domestic violence criminal cases in general.

Comments may be made in writing to the following address, fax number, or e-mail. The submission deadline is June 29, 2007. Please send comments to:

Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force
Center for Families, Children & the Courts
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California 94102-3688
Fax: 415-865-7217
E-mail: DVPPTF@jud.ca.gov

The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.

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